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JOHN RANDOLPH LEWIS.

IN MEMORIAM.



BORN SEPT. 22, 1834.

DIED FEB. 8, 1900.

DEPARTMENT OF GEORGIA, G. A. R.

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## JOHN RANDOLPH LEWIS.

### IN MEMORIAM.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF GEORGIA,  
GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC.

ATLANTA, GA., March 8, 1900.

At the Twelfth Annual Encampment of the Department of Georgia, Grand Army of the Republic, held at Atlanta, Georgia, this date, Comrades C. T. Watson, W. H. Smyth and W. M. Scott were appointed a committee to draft and present suitable resolutions on the death of Comrade John Randolph Lewis, late member of O. M. Mitchel Post No. 1, of Atlanta. Following is the report as presented:

ATLANTA, GA., March 8, 1900.

*To the Twelfth Annual Encampment, Department of Georgia,  
Grand Army of the Republic.*

COMRADES:—It is with great sorrow that the painful duty devolves upon us of submitting a record of the death of our beloved comrade John Randolph Lewis, which occurred at the home of his sister, Mrs. Wm. S. Proudfit, in Chicago, Ill., February 8th, 1900, where he was resting while on the return trip to the East from a journey to the Pacific coast, where he had gone to accompany his wife, who had proceeded to Dawson City to visit their son, Harold B. Lewis, and other relatives.

His remains were taken to the residence of his sister, Mrs. W. L. French, at Buffalo, N. Y., and from thence temporarily interred with military honors in Forest Lawn Cemetery, February 11th, it being the intention to later remove them to Arlington National Cemetery as his final resting place.

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Comrade Lewis was born in Edinboro, Erie Co., Penn., September 22, 1834. As a youth he removed to Buffalo, N. Y., and studied dentistry with his uncle, Dr. John Lewis, afterwards attending the Philadelphia Dental College and obtaining the D. D. S. degree. Returning to Buffalo he practiced his profession there for a time and was married there in 1856 to Frances Helen Mattice. From Buffalo he removed to Burlington, Vt., and was in practice there at the outbreak of the Civil war.

The call of President Lincoln for 75,000 volunteers to sustain the Union of the States brought from him a quick response to what he deemed his duty to his country, and he enlisted in the ranks of the First Vermont Volunteers, a three months regiment, April 20, 1861, being mustered in as Sergeant of Company H, which was immediately ordered to the front, and served on the Peninsula and was engaged in the battle of Big Bethel. The regiment was mustered out August 15, 1861, when he was immediately commissioned Captain in the Fifth Vermont Volunteer Infantry, which became one of the famous fighting regiments of the Army of the Potomac, in all the bloody campaigns of which it served until nearly the close of the war. July 16, 1862, he was commissioned Major of the regiment, being advanced to that rank over five senior Captains, and on their united request, which was looked upon as a promotion singularly honorable to all. Three months later he became Lieutenant Colonel and commanded the regiment during most of its service thereafter, its Colonel being in command of the brigade to which it belonged. He was commissioned Colonel of the regiment, June 4, 1864.

At the battle of the Wilderness, May 5, 1864, he was terribly wounded by a bullet which shattered his left arm, necessitating its amputation at the shoulder joint. To the surprise of the surgeons he survived the operation and several days ride over rough roads in an ambulance with the lack of attention incident to those awful times, his strong will power together with the unremitting care and nursing of his devoted wife, who very quickly joined him, carrying him

through the ordeal, but he never was again a man of health and never without pain, though always cheerful and uncomplaining. His service in the field was at an end, but other duties devolved upon him. Even before he could assume them he was commissioned Colonel of the First Regiment Veteran Reserve Corps, September 8, 1864, and as Brevet Brigadier General U. S. Volunteers March 13, 1865.

From September 1864 to June 1865 he served on Boards of Examination of officers and men for transfer to the Veteran Reserve Corps. Was in command for several months in 1865 of the Post of Elmira, N. Y. During the year 1866 he was Inspector General and Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau at Nashville, Tenn. In 1867 and 1868 he was Inspector General on the staff of General C. C. Sibley, Assistant Commissioner Freedman's Bureau for Georgia. From 1868 to April 28, 1870, he was the Assistant Commissioner for that Bureau for Georgia, with headquarters at Atlanta. His work in that branch of the War Department, unpopular and misunderstood as it was by a majority of the people, was characterized by such ability, justness and honesty as won the respect and confidence of all who came in personal contact with him, and did immeasurable good in those troubled times in allaying bitter feeling and conflicts between the races, and Georgia was spared the scandals that obtained in some other States in connection with the Freedman's Bureau.

General Lewis was commissioned Major of the 44th United States Infantry, January 22, 1867, and Brevet Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel U. S. Army, March 2, 1867. He was retired with the rank of Colonel U. S. Army, April 28, 1870, after an active service of nearly nine years.

After the adoption of the Constitution of this State of 1868, which provided for a Common School system, and the acts of the General Assembly of 1870 to carry it into effect, he was appointed by Governor Bullock State School Commissioner, and he entered into the work of founding the public schools of the State with that intelligence, energy and devotion that fully justified his selection for this important duty. Many obstacles were to be overcome, but he toiled at it night

and day, traveling over the State, holding meetings, appealing to influential men, forming school boards, finding school houses, setting teachers at work and stirring up the people to a sense of the need of education for white and black. It was a labor of love and he performed it with eager delight. Among his friends, in after years, he loved to talk of it much more than of his military experience, full of honor and heroic incidents as they had been. "It was the work of my life," he said once with tears of enthusiasm in his eyes.

The work, however, was short, as political changes made his position uncomfortable and he resigned, but in the two years of his labors he had laid the foundation of the system which we are now enjoying the benefits of.

For a number of years after he lived in the North being in business in Iowa a portion of the time, but returned to Atlanta about 1881, the climate agreeing with him better than elsewhere. He was Assistant Secretary of the Cotton Exposition held that year, contributing much towards its success. He engaged in commercial business and was the head of the Atlanta Rubber Company until 1890, when he was appointed postmaster of Atlanta, continuing as such four years, his fine business qualities giving the city the best postal facilities it had ever enjoyed. In 1895 he was the Secretary of the Cotton States and International Exposition, where his executive capacity had full scope and greatly aided in its renowned success, but his labors in its behalf were too arduous and exacting for his strength, and after the conclusion of them it gave way and he was an invalid until his death.

Comrade Lewis was an original member of O. M. Mitchel Post, aiding in its organization, September 24, 1884, when it became No. 21 of the Department of Tennessee and Georgia. At the National Encampment of 1885, held at Portland, Me., to which he was a representative from the Department, he was elected Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. When the Department of Georgia was organized January 25, 1889, he was elected its Commander. Many questions of importance, not only to the Department, but to the whole organization, some of them of a very delicate character, arose during his

administration, but with his fine sense of justice and honor all were decided in such a manner as to satisfy the various interests, and made the labors of his successors in office much lighter. He became a member of the Ohio Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, December 2, 1885, but had transferred his membership to the District of Columbia Commandery a few years ago.

He thoroughly enjoyed the meetings of the Comrades, took a deep interest in and had a high respect for all who had gone through the fiery furnace of war, and none in distress, whether of the Union or Confederate armies, ever came to him for aid and sympathy in vain, and whenever he erred it was on the side of a too generous charity, both pecuniarily and in overlooking the faults of others. By his many noble traits of character he endeared himself to all his comrades. His temper, his affections, his whole nature had a sweetness and gentleness in them that won the love and confidence of all with whom he associated. Those of us who had the privilege of being intimate with him socially and witnessed his home life can only know how much he enjoyed it, what pleasure it gave him to extend its hospitality to others and what a genial, considerate and loving husband and father he was.

Your committee in presenting this memorial of our deceased Comrade offer for adoption the following resolutions:

*Resolved:* That in the death of General John R. Lewis we are bereft of a bright ornament, a wise adviser, an active, devoted and honored member, and our order a brave and patriotic soldier and citizen.

*Resolved:* That with this memorial we desire to communicate to his sorrowing wife and children, and brothers and sisters, the expression of our heartfelt sympathy in this their great bereavement.

*Resolved:* That this memorial be spread upon our records and that a copy of the same be sent to the family of our late Comrade.

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| C. T. WATSON, | } Committee. |
| W. H. SMYTH,  |              |
| W. M. SCOTT,  |              |

The memorial and resolutions were adopted unanimously, by a rising vote, after feeling remarks by several comrades, and on motion, the Assistant Adjutant General was directed to have them printed in pamphlet form and distributed to comrades of the Department.

*Attest:* JAMES P. AVERILL, Ass't Adj't Gen'l,  
Department of Georgia, G. A. R.

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